

# **Report of the State Preserves Advisory Board 2015-2016 Biennium**

**Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board  
And  
Conservation and Recreation Division  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources**



Marietta Sand Prairie State Preserve, Marshall County, Iowa

## Introduction

The State Preserves Advisory Board (Board) was created by the General Assembly in 1965. The Act (Chapter 465C, Code of Iowa) defines preserve as “an area of land or water formally dedicated under this chapter for maintenance as nearly possible in its natural condition though it need not be completely primeval in character at the time of dedication or an area which has unusual flora, fauna, geological, archaeological, scenic, or historical features of scientific or educational value.” An area becomes a State Preserve when the landowner and the Board agree on the management of the area and the Governor signs the Dedication Statement.

Preserve designation provides an area with the highest form of protection the State of Iowa offers. Preserve status is considered the highest, best, and most important use of an area for the public benefit. The area shall be held in trust and not converted except to another public use upon a finding of the Board of imperative and unavoidable public necessity and with the approval of the Natural Resource Commission, the General Assembly by concurrent resolution, and the Governor.

The State Preserves System is an effort to protect and maintain examples of significant archaeological, historical, geological, biological, and scenic areas for present and future generations. The five types of preserves are defined as follows:

1. *Archaeological* preserves contain significant deposits left by prehistoric or early historic peoples.
2. *Geological* preserves contain distinctive, representative, or unique geological features or deposits.
3. *Historical* preserves contain structures or places that are of significance in studying the tenure of humans in Iowa since the advent of the first Euro-American explorers.
4. *Natural* preserves contain flora and fauna that are representative of natural communities or contain endangered, threatened, or rare organisms.
5. *Scenic* preserves contain scenic features of scientific or educational value.

Areas nominated for preserve designation must be high quality examples of one or more of the five types of preserves listed. A thorough investigation of a proposed preserve is conducted by Department of Natural Resources staff and/or appropriate experts to determine if the area is of preserve quality. A management plan is also completed to determine if the proposed uses and management are consistent with preserve dedication.

Currently there are 97 preserves, encompassing about 10,750 acres. Ownership and management responsibility for the preserves is presented in the list of State Preserves at the end of this report.

Personnel of the Department of Natural Resources work with the State Preserves Advisory Board to carry out its powers and duties. John Pearson serves as ecologist for the Board with the assistance of Kelly Poole and Seth Moore.

Chapter 465C requires that a report be submitted to the governor and legislature every two years accounting for the number and status of the preserves in the system and any other pertinent information. This report summarizes activities for the calendar years 2015 and 2016.

### **State Preserves Advisory Board Meeting Dates and Locations 2015-2016**

February 10, 2015	Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines
April 7, 2015	Yellow Smoke Park, Denison Field trip to Riggleman-Soenksen Woods
July 15, 2015	Tallgrass Prairie Center, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls
October 6, 2015	Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines
January 26, 2016	Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines
April 28, 2016	Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines
July 7, 2016	City Hall, Decorah Field trips to Crossman Prairie, Hayden Prairie, and Decorah Ice Cave state preserves
December 15, 2016	Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines

### **State Preserves Advisory Board Members as of December 30, 2016**

Wayne Phipps, Chair  
1301 Westwood Drive  
Jefferson, IA 50129

Bruce Trautman  
Department of Natural Resources  
Wallace State Office Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Barbara Schroeder  
1280 Old Stage Road  
Decorah, IA 52101

Leesa McNeil  
29365 Diamante Drive  
Sioux City, IA 51109

Dr. Kirk Larsen  
210 E Street  
Decorah, IA 52101

## **Board Members Whose Term Expired 2015-2016**

Kirk Larsen (reappointed)  
Leesa McNeil (reappointed)  
Lynn Alex (replaced with Barbara Schroeder)  
Inger Lamb (vacancy not yet refilled)

Additionally, Board member Loren Christiansen resigned in October 2015. This vacancy has not yet been refilled.

## **Advisers to the Board as of December 30, 2016**

Shirley Schermer  
Office of State Archaeologist  
700 Clinton Street Building  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa 52242

## **Program Purposes**

- To preserve examples of each natural community native to Iowa in as undisturbed condition as possible, allowing scientific investigation, interpretation, and acceptable recreational uses.
- To preserve sites representative of each culture that existed in Iowa in a relative undisturbed condition, allowing carefully regulated excavation and basic interpretive activities compatible with a preservation philosophy and with the concerns of the native people.
- To preserve examples of past geological events and maintain these sites in a condition that will allow scientific study and interpretation to occur.
- To preserve sites which commemorate the tenure of humans in Iowa since the advent of the first Euro-American explorers and to maintain these sites in a condition that will allow a sense of orientation for present and future inhabitants.
- To sponsor research on preserves or potential preserves for purposes of management, acquisition, and interpretation.
- To distribute to the general public, libraries, and colleges information related to preserves in popular or scientific format.
- To assist in surveying Iowa for remaining natural, geological, cultural, historic, or scientific areas.

## **Powers and Duties**

The powers and duties of the Advisory Board are listed under Chapter 465C of the Code of Iowa. They include the following:

1. To approve an area as a preserve.
2. To recommend dedication as preserves, areas owned by the State under the jurisdiction of the Department of Natural Resources.
3. To recommend acquisition of areas for dedication as preserves, subject to approval by the Natural Resource Commission.
4. To recommend dedication as preserves, areas owned by other public agencies, private groups, and individuals.

## **Activities and Accomplishments 2015-2016**

### **Recommendation of Heendah Hills as a new state preserve**

Heendah Hills (formerly known as “Spirit Knoll”) is a scenic, 223-acre area of Loess Hills land north of Sioux City with significant archaeological resources and native prairie remnants. It was acquired by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and transferred to the Department of Natural Resources. The Board approved its nomination as a new state preserve in 2013 pending completion of a management plan. Upon completion of the management plan in 2015, the Board gave its final approval to the nomination and forwarded its recommendation to the Governor’s Office. In September 2016, the Governor’s Office declined preserve designation, explaining that State ownership and management by the Department of Natural Resource were sufficient to preserve and protect the property.

### **Recommendation of Riggleman-Soenksen Woods as a new state preserve**

Riggleman-Soenksen Woods is a 47-acre woodland near Denison, jointly owned and managed by the Crawford County Conservation Board and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. It is an isolated natural forest known for its large population of snow trillium (*Trillium nivale*), an uncommon spring wildflower. In October 2015, the Board approved its management plan and approved its nomination as a new state preserve. Its nomination was placed on hold pending outcome of the Heendah Hills nomination.

### **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State Preserves Act**

The State Preserves Act (Iowa Code 465C) was passed in 1965, marking its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015. John Pearson, Department of Natural Resources ecologist for the Board, presented a history of the preserve system in an event organized by the Iowa Native Plant Society to celebrate this milestone, which also included field trips to several state preserves in northeast Iowa.

### **Management plans approved for Marietta Sand Prairie and Rolling Thunder Prairie state preserves**

These preserves, owned by the Marshall County Conservation Board and the Warren County Conservation Board, respectively, lacked written management plans. The Iowa Prairie Network funded the development of management plans, which were approved by the Board in 2015.

### **Trails in Decorah Ice Cave State Preserve**

Discovering that two unauthorized trails had been constructed over a period of several years in Decorah Ice Cave State Preserve, the Board worked cooperatively with the Decorah Parks & Recreation Department to rectify the situation. The boundary was re-surveyed and posted with signs by the Decorah Parks & Recreation Department. One trail was rerouted around the preserve while the second was closed to bicycles. The Board toured the preserve in July 2016 and was satisfied with the solution.

### **Loess Hills Archaeological Interpretive Center**

In July 2015, the Board approved a business plan for the development of an interpretive center at the Glenwood Archaeological Preserve presented by the Loess Hills Archaeological Interpretive Center Board of Directors. This cleared the way for submission of a sovereign lands construction permit application to the Department of Natural Resources.

### **Transfer of ownership of two preserves from The Nature Conservancy**

The Nature Conservancy, a private conservation organization with a long history of acquisition and management of several state preserves, determined that two of its preserves should be transferred to local conservation agencies that were better positioned to provide cost-effective management. The Board concurred that transferring Cedar Hills Sand Prairie State Preserve to the Black Hawk County Conservation Board and Retz Woods State Preserve to the Clayton County Conservation Board would be appropriate and acceptable. In both cases, transfer will occur gradually during a multi-year transition period to ensure that conservation goals are met.

### **Preserve Management**

Management activities on Iowa's State Preserves are ongoing and are carried out by the designated preserve managers. Major activities included the following:

- Prescribed burning, mowing, and chemical treatment of stumps on prairie preserves to control woody vegetation encroachment.
- Use of mechanical and chemical control methods for reed canary grass and other invasive species.

### **Other issues**

Briefly, other issues addressed by the Board included learning about potential preserves at the Iowaville archaeological site and a fossil site near Decorah, support for the nomination of the Kimball archaeological site as a national historic landmark, declining

the construction of a road and boat ramp in Hardin City Woodand State Preserve, monitoring development of a master plan for the proposed Blood Run State Park relative to Gitchie Manitou State Preserve, tracking land acquisitions adjacent to Turkey River Mounds and Wittrock Village state preserves, exploring options for redesign of broken stormwater lines and culverts in Ames High Prairie, initiation of the development of a modernized management plan for White Pine Hollow State Preserve, and solicitation, evaluation, and selection for funding of research, inventory, and management proposals in state preserves.

### **Research, Inventory, and Management Projects Funded 2015 and 2016**

- Twenty-year resurvey of woody vegetation in permanent plots in northeast Iowa forest preserves, Dr. William Norris (2015 and 2016)
- Bat survey of Fallen Rock State Preserve, Orbis Environmental Consulting (2015)
- Bat Survey of Palisades-Dows State Preserve, Orbis Environmental Consulting (2016)
- Archaeological survey of Heendah Hills preserve, Office of the State Archaeologist (2015 and 2016)
- Control of exotic plant species in Pilot Knob State Preserve, William Watson (2015)
- Conservation assessments of six state preserves, Dr. Wayne Schennum (2015)

### Iowa State Preserves December 2016

<b>PRESERVE NAME</b>	<b>PRESERVE TYPE</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>MANAGER</b>	<b>COUNTY</b>
A.F. Miller/North Woods	Natural	10	Bremer County	Bremer CCB	Bremer
Ames High Prairie/Pohl Preserve	Natural	22	Ames Unified School District	TNC	Story
Anderson Prairie	Natural, Geological	200	State of Iowa	DNR	Emmet
Behrens Ponds and Woodland	Natural	30	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Linn
Berry Woods	Natural, Geological	42	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Warren
Bird Hill	Geological	1	Cerro Gordo County	Cerro Gordo CCB	Cerro Gordo
Bixby	Natural, Geological	183	State of Iowa	DNR	Clayton
Bluffton Fir Stand	Natural, Geological	94	State of Iowa	DNR	Winneshiek
Brush Creek Canyon	Natural, Geological	217	State of Iowa	DNR	Fayette
Brushy Creek	Geological, Natural	260	State of Iowa	DNR	Webster
Cameron Woods	Natural	36	State of Iowa	Scott CCB	Scott
Casey's Paha	Geological	175	State of Iowa	Black Hawk CCB	Tama
Catfish Creek	Geological, Archaeological	600	State of Iowa	DNR	Dubuque
Cayler Prairie	Natural	160	State of Iowa	DNR	Dickinson
Cedar Bluffs Natural Area	Natural, Geological, Scenic	223	Mahaska County	Mahaska CCB	Mahaska
Cedar Hills Sand Prairie	Natural	35	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Black Hawk
Cheever Lake	Natural	366	State of Iowa	DNR	Emmet
Clay Prairie	Natural	3	University of Northern Iowa	UNI	Butler
Claybank Forest	Geological, Natural	56	Cerro Gordo County	Cerro Gordo CCB	Cerro Gordo
Coldwater Cave	Geological, Natural	60	State of Iowa	DNR	Winneshiek
Crossman Prairie	Natural	10	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Howard
Decorah Ice Cave	Geological, Natural	3	City of Decorah	City of Decorah	Winneshiek
Derald Dinesen Prairie	Natural	20	U.S. Government	Shelby CCB	Shelby
Doolittle Prairie	Natural	25	State of Iowa	Story CCB	Story
Eureka Woods	Natural	90	Private	Private	Greene
Fallen Rock	Natural, Geological	122	State of Iowa	Hardin CCB	Hardin
Fish Farm Mounds	Archaeological	3	State of Iowa	DNR	Allamakee
Five Ridge Prairie	Natural, Geological	789	The Nature Conservancy	Plymouth CCB	Plymouth
Fleming Woods	Natural	38	Poweshiek County	Poweshiek CCB	Poweshiek



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Fort Atkinson	Archaeological	5	State of Iowa	DNR	Winneshek
Fossil and Prairie Park	Natural, Geological	292	Floyd County	Floyd CCB	Floyd
Pellett Memorial Woods	Natural	19	State of Iowa	Cass CCB	Cass
Freda Haffner	Natural, Geological	110	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Dickinson
Gitchie Manitou	Natural	91	State of Iowa	DNR	Lyon
Glenwood Archaeological	Archaeological	907	State of Iowa	Mills CCB	Mills
Hanging Bog	Natural	16	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Linn
Hardin City Woodland	Natural	25	State of Iowa	Hardin CCB	Hardin
Hartley Fort	Archaeological	2	Private	Private	Allamakee
Hartman Bluff	Natural	48	Black Hawk County	Black Hawk CCB	Black Hawk
Hayden Prairie	Natural	239	State of Iowa	DNR	Howard
Hoffman Prairie	Natural	36	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Cerro Gordo
Indian Bluffs Primitive Area	Archaeological, Natural	845	Private	Private	Jones
Indian Fish Trap	Archaeological	1	State of Iowa	Amana Society	Iowa
Kalsow Prairie	Natural	160	State of Iowa	DNR	Pocahontas
Kish-Ke-Kosh Prairie	Natural	17	State of Iowa	Jasper CCB	Jasper
Lamson Woods	Natural	20	City of Fairfield	City of Fairfield	Jefferson
Liska-Stanek Prairie	Natural	20	Webster County	Webster CCB	Webster
Little Maquoketa River Mounds	Archaeological	42	State of Iowa	Dubuque CCB	Dubuque
Malanaphy Springs	Geological, Natural	64	State of Iowa	DNR	Winneshek
Malchow Mounds	Archaeological	6	State of Iowa	DNR	Des Moines
Manikowski Prairie	Natural, Geological	40	Clinton County	Clinton CCB	Clinton
Mann Wilderness Area	Natural	103	Hardin County	Hardin CCB	Hardin
Marietta Sand Prairie	Natural	20	Marshall County	Marshall CCB	Marshall
Mericle Woods	Natural	132	State of Iowa	DNR	Tama
Merril A. Stainbrook	Geological	33	U.S. Government	Corps of Engineers	Johnson
Merritt Forest	Natural	20	State of Iowa	DNR	Clayton
Montauk	Historical, Natural	46	State of Iowa	DCA	Fayette
Mossy Glen	Natural, Geological	80	State of Iowa	DNR	Clayton

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Mount Pisgah Cemetery	Historical	1	Church	Union CCB	Union
Mount Talbot	Natural	90	State of Iowa	DNR	Plymouth
Nestor Stiles Prairie	Natural	10	State of Iowa	Cherokee CCB	Cherokee
Ocheyedan Mound	Geological, Natural	24	Osceola CCB	Osceola CCB	Osceola
Old State Quarry	Geological	8	U.S. Government	Corps of Engineers	Johnson
Palisades-Dows	Natural, Geological	330	State of Iowa	Linn CCB	Linn
Pecan Grove	Natural	17	State of Iowa	DNR	Muscatine
Perkins Prairie	Natural	30	Private	Private	Greene
Pilot Grove Historical	Historical, Natural	7	State of Iowa	Iowa CCB	Iowa
Pilot Knob State Park	Natural, Geological	369	State of Iowa	DNR	Hancock
Retz Memorial Woods	Natural, Geological	49	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Clayton
Roberts Creek	Natural, Geological	13	State of Iowa	DNR	Cedar
Rock Creek Island	Geological	60	State of Iowa	Cedar CCB	Cedar
Rock Island Area	Natural	17	Linn County	Linn CCB	Linn
Roggman Boreal Slopes	Natural	20	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Clayton
Rolling Thunder Prairie	Natural	123	Warren County	Warren CCB	Warren
Ryerson's Woods	Natural	49	City of Iowa City	Parks & Recreation	Johnson
St. James Lutheran Church	Historical	1	State of Iowa	DNR	Winnesiek
Savage Memorial Woods	Natural	12	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Henry
Searryl's Cave	Natural, Geological	43	State of Iowa	DNR	Jones
Sheeder Prairie	Natural	25	State of Iowa	DNR	Guthrie
Silver Lake Fen	Natural, Geological	10	State of Iowa	DNR	Dickinson
Silvers-Smith Woods	Natural	20	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Dallas
Slinde Mounds	Archaeological, Natural	32	State of Iowa	DNR	Allamakee
Starr's Cave	Natural, Geological	189	State of Iowa	Des Moines CCB	Des Moines
Steele Prairie	Natural	200	State of Iowa	Cherokee CCB	Cherokee
Stinson Prairie	Natural	32	Kossuth County	Kossuth CCB	Kossuth
Strasser Woods	Natural	40	State of Iowa	DNR	Polk
Sylvan Runkel	Natural	330	State of Iowa	DNR	Monona

Toolesboro	Archaeological	3	State of Iowa	DCA	Louisa
Turin Loess Hills	Natural, Geological	200	State of Iowa	DNR	Monona
Turkey River Mounds	Archaeological, Natural	62	State of Iowa	DNR	Clayton
Vincent Bluff	Scenic	36	City of Council Bluffs	City of Council Bluffs	Pottawattamie
White Pine Hollow	Natural, Geological	712	State of Iowa	DNR	Dubuque
Williams Prairie	Natural	30	The Nature Conservancy	TNC	Johnson
Wittrock Indian Village	Archaeological	6	State of Iowa	DNR	O'Brien
Woodland Mounds	Natural, Archaeological	195	Warren County	Warren CCB	Warren
Woodman Hollow	Natural, Archaeological	63	State of Iowa	DNR	Webster
Woodthrush Woods	Natural	25	City of Fairfield	City of Fairfield	Jefferson

DNR = Department of Natural Resources

DCA = Department of Cultural Affairs

CCB = County Conservation Board

TNC = The Nature Conservancy

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